

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

rabbit heart

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Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Ableism, Alternate Universe - Everyone Lives/Nobody Dies, Antisemitism, F/M, M/M, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Self-Harm, Self-Hatred, also pretty mild it's not a big part of the story but i'm going to warn against it anyway, hey i'm luc and i like projecting on any character that bears a passing resemblance to me, stan has a weird and fucked up romanticization of self-harm going on, stanlon is pretty minor and i'm so sorry about that, that's pretty mild, the mark of a broken fandom

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Bill Denbrough/Stamley Uris, Mike Hanlon/Stamley Uris

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Summary:

Stan Uris is an anomaly, and even he can't quite figure himself out.

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Stan Uris is an anomaly.

He recognizes this, even as he secretly resents his friends. Perhaps if they weren't around, dragging him ever back from the precipice of becoming a nonentity, casting the limelight down on him and his tucked-in shirts and carefully filed nails and kippah settled neatly atop a mess of curls, then he would be able to slip into the shadows, creeping along the edges of the school's halls and riding low beneath the hungry glare of the likes of Henry Bowers and Patrick Hockstetter. People sometimes wonder why he's even friends with them, with obnoxious Richie and hyper-conscious Eddie (perhaps Bill is the only one that they can sort of see as being truly Stan's friend, their relationship quieter, more easy-going, with lighter touches instead of silencing elbows and shoulder jostling and frantic scrabbling).

He knows better, of course. Bowers grinds his face into the snow until it cracks and bleeds, and he can't find a good reason to blame anyone else for it. He's too neat, too fretting, too cowardly, too Jewish to just hide out of sight. If his friends don't bring eyes to him, he'd do it himself, innately. He knows this from the snickers every time he sets up his desk immaculately, only to bend down to retrieve a pencil and straighten up to find his folders in disarray and some bland boy watching him with narrowed, gleeful eyes.

"St-stuh-Stan, are y-you okay?" Bill asks. He's in Bill's house, Richie sprawled across the bed, trying to tickle Eddie, who looks on the verge of punching him in the face. Bill is drawing, but he's looked up, eyes worried, trained on Stan's face.

Stan half-smiles in return and attempts a half-hearted joke that dies in his throat when Bill's hand makes contact with his head. If it were anyone else, he'd jerk away.

Bill tousles his curls, grinning, and says something that Stan can't hear.

He tries not to stand out. It doesn't work. It's hard to let that bother

him.

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The lights jerk and twist above him, whispering their truths into his ears, stealing away his reality until he can feel himself on the brink of fracturing. They dance in the woman's throat even as her teeth break through his skin. His hysteria reaches the point of an unearthly calm. He lets the waves of the words wash over him, because of course his friends don't care for him, of course they abandoned him, leaving him to rot in ruin and bleed and-

And then the woman is gone, and there is nothing but arms that feel like lies and blood coursing down his cheeks and his own wrenching sobs.

"We'd never let anything happen to you," Richie whispers in his ear, uncharacteristically soft.

The clown falls back into the sewer, its face disrupting into shreds and flakes of skin. He prays that it's gone, mumbling Hebrew under his breath, face stricken white and red.

He buries doubt in his chest and lets it fester. When he holds the shard of glass in his palm, he thinks about carving clean up his wrist, a perfectly straight line, deep enough to rasp against the bone. The truths take root in his head, and he sees the insincerity in the eyes that watch him in concern as he stares a moment too long at the gash in his palm.

(He slits perfect straight lines into his thighs and traces them in the dark of night, running his fingertips over the rough edges, a terrible bliss curling in his gut as he feels their symmetrical parallelism, and he knows that this is what he needs, this awful order, the pain and geometric regularity a tether to reality, drops of blood wiped cleanly off the bathroom floor, rough scabs smoothed out by picking fingernails. It's better to think about that than the rest of it. Better to think about that than his friends abandoning him to the mercy of devils and darkness, to think about that than Bill leaving him, Bill smiling at Bev, Bill mocking him in the monster's mouth, Bill, stuttering, stupid, stupidly brave Bill.)

He hates how difficult it is to think about anything other than his steady decline and Bill's unsteady voice.

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They're all affected differently, after the Incidents.

"They're GAZEBOS, they're BULLSHIT!" Eddie recounts, to the delight of Richie, who takes a full two minutes to recover from his hysteria enough to inform Eddie that, in fact, the pills were absolutely not gazebos, and Eddie's heroism was marked by a very silly error. Eddie's face flushes, and he shoves Richie with his good arm, sending the bespectacled boy toppling off Bill's bed.

They're back there, but there's more than there once was, crammed into the little bedroom.

Eddie, Stan muses, might be the best off. He was traumatized, certainly. He sometimes whimpers in his sleep, hands tensing into fists, breathing hitching to the point that he awakes, coughing and begging for the inhaler Stan is almost positive he doesn't really need. But Eddie carries himself differently. There's a certain confidence, despite his return to being under his mother's thumb. He knows what he can do, and he knows that there's bravery in his heart. He faced his fears and fought them back with a high-pitched scream and panicked fury.

Richie continues laughing from the floor, although it's transformed from something genuine into a form of fond mocking. "Wait, so if you fought Mrs. K. that bad, does that mean she's in search of a new boy to pamper and protect? 'cause you know you can always let her know that I am free and fully ready to—"

Eddie flings a pillow at his head to shut him up. Stan completely understands.

Richie is a little more difficult to figure out, and Stan doesn't like what he sees. The other boy is louder, cracking more jokes and responding with more innuendos, desperate for someone to see him, to notice him. Stan doesn't know exactly what went on inside Neibolt, when he heard Richie's panicked yells the first time, and he

doesn't ask.

Richie is acting out more. He wants people to remember him. And even if Stan hates the increase in touching and roughhousing, the high-fives raised for unimaginative sexual jokes, the teasing and the tormenting, he finds himself shutting Richie down less. If the Trashmouth needs to make himself feel better, Stan is willing to let him do that. He won't interfere.

Ben dodges a pillow as Richie turns the silencing strike into a full-blown war. "Guys, come on, something might break if you keep at it," he warns.

Stan doesn't know Ben. He likes him. He's quieter than most, not so quiet that Stan feels that for once he may need to be the one to keep up the conversation to avoid awkwardness. He reads, mostly, still unsure of how to deal with friendships, especially when your friends were gained in such odd conditions. Stan isn't close to him, but he feels bonded. He thinks it's because of them all, Ben was the only one to come out of it with a physical reminder. Eddie's arm will heal, their scrapes and bruises will fade, but the 'H', crossed with claws, will remain etched into Ben's soft stomach for the rest of his life, and Stan's face will be ringed with gently puckering scars and his thighs will be laced in narrow gashes too orderly and frequent to have occurred in nature that glare out at him with every glance at the mirror.

Mike laughs under his breath. He's reading one of the books in Ben's bags, perusing the history of Derry, teeth gnawing on the metal-wrapped eraser at the end of a dulled pencil. He's barely paying attention to them, but it's clear he enjoys seeing Richie get hit with a pillow as much as any other sane individual would.

Mike is the quietest. Stan likes to rest his head against Mike's shoulder, forgetting everything as he feels the firmness of the bone and muscle. He likes to watch Mike's fingers turning the pages of the books he devours, or writing out home-ordered essays in carefully looping handwriting. Stan doesn't know what he was like before the monster came and tore to shreds the seven's innocence, but he hopes Mike wasn't terribly altered. He hopes that the quietness is natural, not driven by a fear he feels he cannot utter.

They didn't know each other, certainly, but they knew of one another, Stan realizes. There was an unspoken connection between them, the victims of Bowers's most concentrated hatred, manifesting in fearful eye contact and the silent agreement to stand by the other in the event that they as a pair ever crossed paths with the Bowers Gang. Stan supposed, curling his hand into a fist and touching the scar on his palm, that it was now spoken.

When they all have a sleepover, and Stan jerks awake with a strangled scream, head a mess and brain tumbling down the gullet of the flute-player, Mike is the one who sits with him, the earliest riser of the bunch, indoctrinated into little sleep by the schedule of farming. He is the one who rests his heavy hand against Stan's back and rubs soothing circles in between Stan's sharp shoulder-blades, murmuring comfort into his ear as Stan's pulse slows back to normal.

Beverly leaves, and visits the next summer. Stan decides he doesn't like her. It's the way Bill looks at her, so warm and heartfelt, even as she gravitates closer to Ben, even as Bill's heart breaks little by little. Stan watches Bill watching Beverly, and decides he hates her. He hates how she was taken by it itself, and felt such little fear it couldn't even consume her entire. He hates her bravery, so closely matching Bill's, so warmly entwining with Ben's, so appealing, like a bright sun that draws in everyone around him. He hates that she looks at him with openly sympathetic eyes; there's something pitying in her gaze, and he doesn't like the depth of it, because what of him does she find so very desolate?

He worries that she can see through him. He worries that when he watches Bill watch Beverly, Beverly watches him, with that same terribly sorrowful look on her face.

So he resolves to hate her. He pretends that it works, pretends that absence cannot make a heart determined to disdain grow fonder.

"If you guh-guys break a l-luh-luh-lamp, my mom's g-gonna have a fit," Bill complains. He's holding a half-glued lego turtle in his hand, concentrating on fitting the next piece onto the construction before the latest spot dries. The hot glue gun balances precariously on the edge of his desk and, itching, Stan reaches out to push it away.

Bill. Bill, with a stare that can be a thousand miles away, entirely too weary and entirely too grown-up to be comfortable. Bill, the only one who can get Stan to enter sewers and savage settlements, who can bring Stan to the verge of death and push him on to fight.

Out of all of them, Stan resents Bill the most. Bill is the reason for it all. If G-

Stan catches himself before he finishes that thought.

Bill is preoccupied. There's an empty hole in his heart where another once was, a little boy with a smile that could melt even Stan's father, and another that grows with each secret smile and flirtatious exchange between Bev and Ben. Stan wants nothing more than to patch up those holes with careful, precise stitches, fashion perfect fillings with muscle and blood to plug up the emptiness.

He knows he can't.

He wants, of course. It's confusing. He wants Bill to look at him, not Bev.

He knows he can't have what he wants.

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He keeps the exacto knife in his drawer pristine and clean. He becomes better acquainted with it each time he feels himself begin to lose touch. They've gotten to know each other sixty times. He's not looking forward to the moment he breaks that nice round number.

He stops swimming with the boys, bit by bit, first stripping down only to his shorts, then refusing to take off his t-shirt, then not bothering to remove anything at all. He says he prefers to watch birds from the shore, and absently rubs his thumbs over the hidden grooves in the crooks of his elbows.

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Beverly visits again, and Stan ignores that her eyes catch on the bags beneath his eyes and his fingers fumbling the cuffs of his long-sleeved shirt.

Bill stops looking at her. Ben embraces her, and they hug a moment too long. Eddie and she embrace, and then she and Richie mock each other before pulling the other into a hug so painfully platonic it almost hurts to see. Mike and she commence a secret handshake that Stan doesn't understand how they've remembered.

He sits with Bill after she comes back, and watches him paint.

"Do you still like Beverly?"

The brush leaves behind a blue trail, connecting the falling flowers.

"I d-d-don't think so."

Stan nods.

"Wuh-what about yuh-y-you? You never t-t-talk about any guh-girls."

It'd be funny if it wasn't so much like a slap in the face.

"Hm. No. There's no one. I'm glad you aren't still hung up on Bev, though. She's pretty clearly revolving around Ben."

Bill laughs, and Stan basks in the sound. "Yuh-yuh-yeah, I know. Seems ruh-really obvious, now thu-th-that I look back on everything."

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Eddie is the one to find out about Stan's first secret, much to his horror. Richie can't shut up unless he has a secret. Eddie can't shut up if he has one. He walks in on Stan changing, and gapes at him for a full ten seconds before bolting.

And that's how Stan finds himself sitting on his bed, numbly staring at his interlocked fingers as the voices of his friends dull into a buzzing hum in the background.

They take away the exacto knife. They ask him for his reasons behind everything. He doesn't really know how to answer that. Anger, maybe, with nowhere to direct it. Self-hatred. Self-doubt. Fear.

He doesn't doubt that it's better to not have the cold metal villain in

his drawer, but he hates the result. They treat him like he's fragile.

Ben talks more when it's just the two of them, forcing conversation into what had previously been companionable quiet. Richie refrains from insulting him, holding his tongue even when Stan accidentally gives him the perfect material. Eddie fusses over him in a manner awfully reminiscent of his mother, trying to give Stan a variety of antidepressants and solvents and scar-erasing cremes. Mike treats him like the animal at the end of the gun, something that needs to be lulled into as secure a sense of falsehood as he can manage (and the change with Mike especially feels like such a betrayal). Bill looks at Stan now, but it's with watery doe eyes, down-turned and above a quivering lip ready to spill monologues about internal bravery and how Stan needs to recognize what a good person he truly is.

Beverly treats him different, but he's grateful for that. She's always walked a little on eggshells around him. Now, she walks normally, becoming louder to fill the gaps made by the alterations in his friends.

He breaks down, eventually. Yells at them. Screams. He doesn't even know exactly what he's saying, only that everything he's channeled into the steel's business end is spilling out of him, all his repressed worries and anxieties and that overwhelming, overpowering, crushing, all-consuming terror.

Stan has the worst nightmares of all of us, he remembers overhearing Mike telling Eddie, and he hates him for taking note.

And when the rage turns to sorrow turns to tears, he finds himself wrapped up once more in a seven-person protective embrace.

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They all try to get out of their heads.

Stan wears shorts again.

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"Bill."

They're seventeen. Bill looks up at him from the notes he's studying. He has a physics exam the next day.

"What's wrong, Stanny?"

Stan sits down next to him, shifting from side to side and trying to find the words.

"I used to hate Bev."

"W...why? Where is this cuh-coming from?"

Stan tilts back and pillows his head against the corner of Bill's bed.

"I hated her because I felt like she was taking you away from me."

Bill closes the notebook. His brow is furrowed in oblivious confusion.

"Why were you afraid of th-that?"

Breathe in, out, in, out, count the number of legos that make up the turtle on the desk.

"I think I've felt it for a long time. Since before that...that summer. Since before the summer we even met Bev, and Mike, and Ben."

He didn't look at Bill.

"I think I've loved you for a long time, Bill. And out of everything, it was what gave me the least issues. I almost saw it as in...insignificant. Like it didn't need to be said."

He hears Bill's sharp intake of breath, and barrels on. "But it does need to be said. I...you mean so much-"

There's lips against his, and they're soft, and warm, and slightly chapped.

It's quick and clean. Bill pulls back almost instantly, uncertainty emanating from his tensed shoulders and trembling hands.

Stan almost wants to laugh.

He repeats the kiss instead.

And so goes Stan's second secret.

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Graduation comes and goes. They go to different colleges, all of them. They keep in touch.

Bill and Stan move in together, after Stan gets his master's degree and comes to Bill's city, after Bill has his first novel in the works.

They sit in their living room and interlock fingers as they drink their morning coffee and contemplate the latest news.

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Mike calls, and Stan realizes, sickening and sudden, that he's forgotten Mike. He's forgotten the reason behind the scars on his body. He knows Bill, remembers growing up with Bill, but the gaps that were unexplained are suddenly filled.

Stan takes a bath and Bill packs his bag, and then vice versa.

They arrive in Derry. Bev is as beautiful as ever, a wedding band encircling her finger, Ben in tow behind her, still as starstruck as ever. Eddie is flustered. Richie is mocking. Mike is lovely and real and someone precious that Stan hugs for a moment too long.

Stan is so terrified to face It. He doesn't want to. If Bill and Mike weren't at his left and right, he'd dig his heels in the dirt, run and flee and disappear from existence, go to the ends of the spherical earth to escape this fate. He can't breathe. He feels like Eddie as he stares into the dark tunnels.

Bill is on the warpath. Mike's fingers take hold of Stan's, and they enter unto the unlit halls, each gripping the other in an effort to calm the same nerves that they couldn't still in themselves.

They fight underground. Eddie's arm is gone, and Stan lets the others fight as he bandages up the injury, pressing firmly against it to reduce loss of blood. Richie pets Eddie's hair soothingly, moving

sweat-drenched bangs out of the way and folding up the other man's glasses to tuck into his own shirt pocket.

It's dead.

Stan stares at his face in the mirror, at the faint dashes of pink that mark the old bite, and realizes that he finds them a part of him, now.

He and Bill go back to the city.

A man shows up with a bird as an offering, a desire to see the world, and a sheepish offer to pay however much of the rent is necessary for them to let him stay until he figures out what he wants to do with his life.

Stan and Bill welcome Mike into their home, finding it strange they'd forgotten him, and Stan names the bird Beverly. He doesn't know why.

Stan is scarred, forever. Stan is scared, perpetually. Stan is loved, eternally.

Stan heals.

Author's Note:

boys i'm dying because this took forever and it's 3:00 AM and i'm so tired and this Is Not Proofread. anyway i hope you enjoyed what's essentially just me pouring an emotional breakdown down your throats in the guise of an introspective look into stan the man's headspace.